

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 CU-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-07 A-01 SY-05
OPR-02 /076 W
-----162003Z 024100 /44

R 161702Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL GENOA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 7966

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, IT
SUBJECT: VIOLENT WEEKEND IN ITALIAN CITIES

REF: A) ROME 7881; B) 7550

SUMMARY: VIOLENT ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN POLICE AND EXTREMIST STUDENTS TOOK PLACE IN ROME, MILAN, AND NAPLES ON MAY 13 AND 14 AS LESS SERIOUS INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN TURIN, BOLOGNA, PALERMO, BRESCIA, & BOLZANO. IN ROME A TRAFFIC POLICEMAN RECEIVED SERIOUS GUNSHOT WOUNDS WHEN HE STOPPED A LEFT WING TERRORIST FOR A TRAFFIC VIOLATION, WHILE IN MILAN A POLICEMAN WAS FATALLY WOUNDED IN THE COURSE OF A DEMONSTRATION ON MAY 14. EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY LEFTIST GROUPS STILL PLAN TO CHALLENGE THE GOVERNMENT'S BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN ROME WITH A MASS RALLY SCHEDULED FOR MAY 19. THE HARD LINE TAKEN BY INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA IN CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES ON MAY 13 (SEE REF A) WAS REFLECTED IN PROPOSALS APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS THE SAME DAY AND ECHOED BY PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI
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IN AN UNUSUALLY STRONGLY WORDED ADDRESS TO DC YOUTH AT BERGAMO ON MAY 15. ALL PARTIES OF THE "CONSTITUTIONAL ARC", WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE RADICALS, APPEAR PREPARED TO BACK GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO RE-ESTABLISH PUBLIC ORDER. END SUMMARY.

1. VIOLENT, LARGE-SCALE ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN POLICE AND

STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS OCCURRED IN MILAN, NAPLES, AND ROME ON MAY 13 AND 14 WITH THE HEAVIEST CLASHES ON THE LATTER DATE. THE OSTENSIBLE PURPOSE OF THE MARCHES WAS TO PROTEST POLICE ACTIONS DURING MAY 12 INCIDENTS IN ROME WHICH RESULTED IN THE DEATH OF A YOUNG WOMAN (SEE REF A) BUT IN MOST CASES GROUPS OF DEMONSTRATORS SOUGHT OUT CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE POLICE. THE MOST SERIOUS INCIDENTS OCCURRED IN MILAN WHERE A POLICEMAN WAS MORTALLY WOUNDED BY GUNFIRE DURING A CLASH WITH MARCHERS AND SEVERAL BUSINESSES WERE FIRE-BOMBED. IN ROME A TRAFFIC POLICEMAN WAS BADLY WOUNDED BY A "STUDENT" HE HAD STOPPED FOR A TRAFFIC VIOLATION. HIS ASSAILANT WAS CAPTURED AND IDENTIFIED BY POLICE AS A MEMBER OF THE NAP (ARMED PROLETARIAN NUCLEI), A LEFT WING TERRORIST ORGANIZATION. LESS SERIOUS INCIDENTS, INCLUDING FIRE-BOMBINGS AND MINOR CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN EXTREMISTS AND THE FORCES OF ORDER, OCCURRED IN TURIN, BOLOGNA, PALERMO, BRESCIA, AND BOLZANO. FOR ROME THE WORST MAY BE YET TO COME AS EXTREME LEFT EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS HAVE ANNOUNCED THEIR INTENTION TO GO AHEAD WITH PLANS FOR A MAY 19 RALLY AND MARCH BY SUPPORTERS FROM ALL PARTS OF ITALY IN VIOLATION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S FORTY-DAY BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE CAPITAL.

2. AFTER A TOUGH SPEECH IN THE CHAMBER OF INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA ON MAY 13, THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS APPROVED FURTHER LAW-AND-ORDER PROPOSALS. INCREASED JAIL SENTENCES, INCLUDING LIFE IMPRISONMENT,
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FOR ATTACKS ON LEGISLATIVE, GOVERNMENT, JUDICIAL, OR PENITENTIARY OFFICIALS AND UP TO THREE YEARS FOR THREATS OR VIOLENCE AGAINST LAWYERS WERE ANNOUNCED. SEVERE PENALTIES WERE ALSO ANNOUNCED FOR PERSONS AIDING KIDNAP ATTEMPTS OR RANSOM COLLECTIONS AND FOR THOSE WHO USE RADIO EQUIPMENT TO UPSET POLICE COMMUNICATIONS. IN ADDITION, THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS GAVE FORMAL APPROVAL TO A NUMBER OF PROPOSALS PUT FORWARD EARLIER BY JUSTICE MINISTER BONIFACIO (SEE REF B), INCLUDING MEASURES TO IMPROVE PRISON SECURITY AND INCREASE THE GUARD FORCE AND DRAFT LAW DESIGNED TO SPEED THE HEARING OF CRIMINAL CASES IN THE COURTS. MORE CONROVERSIAL MEASURES, SUCH AS PREVENTIVE DETENTION AND THE STRENGTHENING OF INTERNAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONS, ARE PRESENTLY BEING DISCUSSED IN THE INTER-PARTY CONSULTATIONS. IN A SPEECH TO THE DC YOUTH CONGRESS IN BERGAMO PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI UNDERLINED HIS GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO TAKE A HARD LINE AGAINST VIOLENCE AND LAWLESSNESS. SPEAKING

IN UNCHARACTERISTICALLY STRONG TERMS, ANDREOTTI CALLED ON ALL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO BRING THE COUNTRY BACK TO NORMALCY.

3. WHILE RESERVATIONS WERE EXPRESSED, BY THE PSI IN PARTICULAR, ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT'S INSISTANCE ON MAINTAINING THE BAN ON DEMONSTRATIONS IN ROME, THE ABSTAINING PARTIES APPEAR PREPARED TO BACK THE ADMINISTRATION ON STRONG LAW-AND-ORDER MEASURES. PCI DAILY L'UNITA CALLED FOR PUBLIC UNITY IN THE FACE OF THE VIOLENCE AND STRONGLY CONDEMNED THE RADICAL PARTY FOR FAVORING "PROVOCATIONS AND VIOLENCE". THE RADICALS AND THE PDUP ARE NOW THE ONLY GROUPS IN PARLIAMENT SERIOUSLY CRITICIZING THE GOVERNMENT'S HARD LINE ON PUBLIC ORDER.

4. COMMENT: WHILE IT APPEARS THAT THE ABSTAINING
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PARTIES HAVE GIVEN THE GOVERNMENT A FREE HAND TO RESTORE PUBLIC ORDER, THE PROOF WILL COME ONLY WHEN HARD LEASURES ARE PUT TO A VOTE IN PARLIAMENT. MEANWHILE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE FIRST TEST OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S DETERMINATION WILL COME ON MAY 19, WHEN THE LEFTWING EXTRA-PARLIAMENTARIANS PLAN TO MARCH ON ROME. IN THE PRESENT TENSE SITUATION A GREAT DEAL IN TERMS OF PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT COULD RIDE ON SUCH A TEST OF WILL AND OF STRENGTH.GARDNER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, POLITICAL SITUATION, CIVIL DISORDERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 16-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ROME07966
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770173-0671
Format: TEL
From: ROME
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770553/aaaabtgr.tel
Line Count: 148
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3f56be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 ROME 7881
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2504484
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VIOLENT WEEKEND IN ITALIAN CITIES
TAGS: PINT, PINS, IT
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3f56be92-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009